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SUBJECT: IRAQ: TURKS TERM JULY 21 CAIRO IRAQ NEIGHBORS
MEETING "GOOD START;" HIGHLIGHT THEIR OWN HELPFULNESS IN
DERAILING UNHELPFUL PROPOSALS

REF: CAIRO 5534

Classified By: CDA Robert Deutsch for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

Summary

1. (C) Iraq's neighbors are increasingly willing to engage with a newly sovereign Iraqi government, Turkish officials told us on July 23, though some are still holding back. MFA Deputy Director General for Middle East Safak Gokturk said that the tone of the July 21 Cairo meeting of Iraq's neighboring FonMins was positive, and that their agreement to bring together a similar grouping of interior ministers was a good concrete initiative. Gokturk said that the Turks worked hard and successfully to turn off two unhelpful proposals at the meeting: one (oddly) to tie the neighbors group to the UNSC P5, the other to include negative language on alleged Israeli activities in northern Iraq. Gokturk cited Iranian activities in Iraq as a major GOT concern. The Turks are annoyed by Iraqi ForMin Zebari's nonchalance about a map reportedly used in schools in northern Iraq showing a greater Kurdistan biting off large chunks of Turkish territory. Finally, the Turks are shrugging off Iraqi PM Allawi's unavailability to visit Ankara in July; PM Erdogan will offer another date for the fall. End summary.

Turkish MFA: Cairo Meeting Positive, Interior Minister
Initiative a Concrete Step

2. (C) On July 23, PolMilCouns and PolMilOff called on MFA Deputy Director General for Middle East Safak Gokturk for a readout of the July 21 meeting of the FonMins of Iraq and its seven neighbors. Gokturk reported that the tone of the meeting was more constructive than previous meetings since this was the first such gathering following the handover of sovereignty to the Iraqi Interim Government (IIG). It was, he pronounced, "a good start." He noted that some ministers who had been less willing to engage the Iraqi Governing Council were more willing to do so with the IIG, though "some" still have misgivings. Gokturk cited the decision to convene a meeting of interior ministers and security officials of the neighboring states as a positive, concrete outcome. It became clear during the discussion, he said, that Iraq's neighbors were just as concerned about security concerns emanating from Iraq as Iraq was about the terrorist and other threats coming into the country. In addition to Turkey, he cited Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Iran as among the most concerned.

Turks Turn Off Proposal to Tie Neighbors Group to P5...

3. (C) Gokturk was anxious to highlight for us Turkey's role in blocking two unhelpful proposals which came up during the meeting. According to Gokturk, Iraqi ForMin Zebari suggested that the neighbors group establish a contact group to work with the UNSC P5. This struck the Turks and others as strange, as there are many other groups (the entire UNSC, the UNSYG's "Friends of Iraq" grouping, even the OIC) with which the neighbors group could so interact. Indeed, Gokturk found this suggestion even more odd since the P5 was so divided on OIF in the first place. He suspected that Zebari was making this suggestion in an attempt to phase out the neighbors group by making it senseless. Turkey, he said, spoke up most vocally against this idea during the senior officials meeting to hash out the declaration text; later the ministers dropped the contact group idea altogether. He added that Amb. Brahimi had also opposed Zebari's proposal.

...And Fight Against Negative Language on Israel

4. (C) Gokturk reported that Syria and Iran pushed hard for language on alleged Israeli activities in northern Iraq, with Jordan and host Egypt willing to go along. According to the Turks, Zebari himself opposed language on Israel, saying that they were unsubstantiated. The Turks argued that this gathering was the wrong forum for going after Israel, and that to single out Israel in the midst of numerous reports that other countries are interfering in Iraq would "place the burden of proof on the shoulders" of the neighbors group. In the end, the ministers killed the language but allowed the

Egyptian ForMin to mention the issue at his discretion during the Q and A of his closing press conference.

15. (C) Possible Israeli activity and intentions in northern Iraq are a concern for the GOT, Gokturk confirmed, but Turkey had bilateral channels through which it could address these directly with Israel. Gokturk added that the GOT remains most concerned about Iran's intentions in Iraq, citing the clear presence of many Iranian operatives there and the appointment of a SCIRI leader to the Deputy FonMin post.

Turks Annoyed at Kurdistan Map...

16. (C) Gokturk reported that in his formal statement at the gathering, FonMin Gul showed his colleagues a troubling map that--he claims--is being used in schools in northern Iraq. It shows a greater Kurdistan as a separate political entity, an entity which includes large chunks of Turkish territory. Zebari reportedly (and disingenuously, for the Turks) responded that these were merely "population maps," simply showing where there were large pockets of Kurds in the region. If this were the case, the map ought to show large chunks of western Turkey all the way to Istanbul, since that is where most of Turkey's Kurdish population resides, Gokturk added.

...But Take Allawi's Snub in Stride

17. (C) According to Gokturk, PM Erdogan had some time ago offered Iraqi PM Allawi a July 26 date to visit Ankara. The Iraqis did not reply until after Allawi had left Baghdad for his current barnstorming tour, stating as the reason that the PM was going to be elsewhere but without much more explanation. Apparently the Turks have decided to play it cool on this issue: Gokturk said that the GOT "will not make a big deal" out of the fact that Allawi placed first priority on Iraq's Arab neighborhood. The Turks will offer PM Allawi another date in the fall.

18. (U) Baghdad minimize considered.
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